

Bioethics in International Research: Fogarty International Center/NIH Activities

Global Forum on Bioethics in Research

FIC convened the first Global Forum on Bioethics in Research in Bethesda in 1999 to provide a venue for developing country researchers, counterparts in the North, and science funding agency representatives to explore and examine as a community the complex issues involved in the conduct of research in the developing world. Over 75% of the participants were from the developing world. At the first Forum, a range of the topics was discussed. By design, no recommendations were produced. Instead, the value of the Forum was that it provided an opportunity to air views in a supportive environment. One Ugandan scientist noted that “for the first time” he felt that he was able to express concerns about critical ethical issues confronting him and colleagues as they conducted clinical studies.

Based on the success of the first Forum, annual Forums have held ever since. A range of agencies have participated as chief organizers:

Forum 2, organized by WHO, held in Bangkok. Chief topics focused mainly on fairness, benefit sharing and community benefit agreements in the context of clinical trials);

Forum 3, Organized by the UK MRC, held in Cape Town. Chief topics related to bioethics and public health research, including ethical guidelines related to post-trial access to drugs);

Forum 4, Organized by PAHO, held in Brasilia. Chief topics related to bioethical issues in genomics research;

Forum 5, organized INSERM, held in Paris. Chief topics related intellectual property issues in health research.

The majority of funding and logistical support in the first three years came from FIC. As we brought this to the attention of all ICs, others joined in as financial and intellectual co-sponsors: NHGRI, NIGMS, NIAID, NIDCR, NIEHS, NICHD, NHLBI, NIDA, NINDS, NIA and NCCAM. More recently, funding has derived from an international consortium of the NIH partners, CDC, Wellcome Trust, Rockefeller Foundation, UK MRC, the European Commission and WHO. FIC played a key role in lining up additional external partners. The next forum, to be held in Malawi, and hosted by The Wellcome Trust, will focus on post-trial access to drugs, devices and vaccines.

This initiative is a model for building public trust with developing country groups.

International Bioethics Education and Career Development Award Program

At the inaugural Forum, on Bioethics in Research described above, a portion of the agenda was devoted to outlining the needs for building the capacity in developing

countries for ethical oversight of research. FIC's response to this was to develop a research bioethics training grant program that focused on training ethicists who understood the fundamental principles and the cultural nuances in the interpretation of these principles as manifested in the guidelines being developed by other international organizations. Launched in March 2000, the International Bioethics Education and Career Development Award program is an institutional training grant that enables institutions to develop or expand current graduate curricula and training opportunities in international bioethics related to performing research in developing countries.

FIC in partnership with nine other co-funding ICs and agencies (National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM), National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI), National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR), National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)) currently provides approximately \$4 million to support sixteen four-year training programs (in the U.S., Canada, and Australia with developing country collaborators and in South Africa, Chile, Philippines, Bangladesh and India) and two planning grants for developing country institutions. Since 2001, more than 180 trainees from forty developing countries have participated in the training programs.

For more information, review this web page:

<http://www.fic.nih.gov/programs/bioethics/bioethicsaward.html>

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